



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** December 23, 2008

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

**SUBJECT:** Sole Source Purchase Of Native Plants From Growing Solutions Restoration Education Institute And Santa Barbara Natives, Inc.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council:

- A. Find it in the City's best interest to waive the bidding process as provided by Municipal Code Section 4.52.080 (k) and authorize the General Services Manager to issue Purchase Orders to Santa Barbara Natives, Inc., in the amount of \$37,500 and to Growing Solutions Restoration Education Institute in the amount of \$37,500, for a total cost of \$75,000; and
- B. Authorize the General Services Manager to issue Purchase Orders for native plants from Growing Solutions Restoration Education Institute and Santa Barbara Natives, Inc., for four subsequent consecutive fiscal years in amounts approved by City Council in the annual budget process.

### DISCUSSION:

Native plants are a key component of most ecological restoration projects. They form the foundation of native ecosystems and food webs, uptake excess nutrients, and sequester carbon. Plants native to Santa Barbara are adapted to local soils, climate, and pollinators. Consequently, scientists and restoration practitioners recommend locally-native plants for restoration projects, rather than importing plants native to other regions of California.

The Creeks Division uses locally-native plants to naturally treat urban storm water runoff, create riparian habitat, and reduce soil erosion at sites throughout the City. Over 9,000 locally-native plants were installed at the Old Mission Creek and Arroyo Burro Estuary restoration projects, with several hundred plants installed annually at smaller community restoration sites. The need for locally-sourced native plants will continue as the Creeks Division implements additional projects. Identifying a reliable source for locally-native plants is important for the success of these projects.

### Vendor Selection

The Creeks Division contacted five native plant wholesale nurseries in the southern California area. Only two companies – Growing Solutions Restoration Education Institute and Santa Barbara Natives, Inc. – collect, grow, and sell a wide selection of plants native to the south coast of Santa Barbara for restoration purposes. The three other companies cited a lack of knowledge of seed collection sites, too much travel time, and unreliable seed availability due to seasonal variation. Other organizations that conduct ecological restoration in the Santa Barbara area did not know of additional local native plant growers.

Growing Solutions and Santa Barbara Natives have provided locally-native plants to the City of Santa Barbara in the past, and both companies have been reliable and cost-effective. Recent price quotes from each company show they charge the same amount for plants. However, their respective inventories are different and can vary during certain times of the year due to natural availability and the previous year's seed-collecting efforts. Staff recommends issuing purchase orders to both Growing Solutions and Santa Barbara Natives to ensure the Creeks Division will have reliable sources for a diversity of locally-native plants.

### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Funding is available in the Creeks Division Fiscal Year 2009 capital and operating budgets to cover the cost for the plants. The total cost of the two purchase orders is \$75,000. Renewal of the purchase order in Fiscal Year 2010 and beyond will be subject to budget approval.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:**

The term "native plant" reflects both a geographic origin and a specific genetic make-up. Plants native to a particular region (i.e., from a specific watershed) have adaptations that increase the likelihood the plant will survive and reproduce when grown in the same watershed. Locally-native plants are adapted to the local climate and soils, which means they require less irrigation and fertilizer after establishment, thereby reducing water use, energy, and the need to replant. Furthermore, native plants sourced from local watersheds reduce the amount of pollutants produced during long-distance transport.

**PREPARED BY:** George Thomson, Creeks Planner

**SUBMITTED BY:** Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office